

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
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R 311247Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9489
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 5077

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PINS, LE, SY
SUBJECT: A VIEW FROM THE LEFT: COMMENTS OF AL MURABITUN
OFFICIAL SAMIR SABBAGH

REF: BEIRUT 4297

1. SUMMARY. SAMIR SABBAGH SAID THE FOLLOWING AUGUST 30.
THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT WAS CONTINUING TO STAY OUT OF THE
FIGHTING BETWEEN SYRIANS AND CHRISTIANS. THE NATIONAL
MOVEMENT WAS ALSO CONTINUING TO ORDER ITS MEMBERS NOT RPT NOT
TO ATTACK ANY FOREIGN EMBASSIES, INCLUDING THE AMERICAN
EMBASSY. PRESIDENT SARKIS WOULD TRY TO FORM ANOTHER POLITICAL
CABINET, BUT HIS CHANCES OF SUCCESS WERE "NIL". THERE WERE
COUNTLESS ARMED GROUPS IN WEST BEIRUT, AND NOBODY COULD
CONTROL THEM. END SUMMARY.

2. SAMIR SABBAGH, A LEADING OFFICIAL OF THE LEFTIST
INDEPENDENT NASSERIST MOVEMENT (AL MURABITUN) TOLD EMBOFF
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THE FOLLOWING AUGUST 30. THE LEBANESE NATIONAL MOVEMENT (TO
WHICH AL MURABITUN BELONGS) IS CONTINUING TO ORDER ITS
MEMBERS TO STAY OUT OF THE CURRENT FIGHTING BETWEEN CHRISTIANS
AND SYRIANS (SABBAGH CLAIMED ON JULY 28 THAT HE WOULD WARN US
IF AL MURABITUN WERE PLANNING TO ENTER THE FIGHTING.
SEE REFTTEL.)

3. THE LEADERSHIP OF THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT, SPECIFICALLY INCLUDING THE MURABITUN LEADERSHIP, HAS CONTINUED TO ORDER ITS MEMBERS NOT RPT NOT TO ATTACK FOREIGN EMBASSIES OR THEIR PERSONNEL, SPECIFICALLY INCLUDING THE AMERICAN EMBASSY. THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT BELIEVES ANY SUCH ATTACKS WOULD BE SELF-DEFEATING. SABBAGH SAID THAT HE COULD NOT GUARANTEE, HOWEVER, THAT UNDISCIPLINED MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT ACTING AS INDIVIDUALS WOULD NOT COMMIT CRIMES AGAINST AMERICANS AND OTHER FOREIGNERS.

4. PRESIDENT SARKIS WAS PLANNING ANOTHER INITIATIVE AIMED AT ARRIVING AT NATIONAL ENTENTE. AS HAD BEEN THE CASE WHEN PRIME MINISTER AL-HOSS SUBMITTED HIS RESIGNATION IN APRIL, SARKIS WOULD TRY TO REPLACE THE CABINET OF "TECHNOCRATS" WITH A CABINET OF POLITICIANS. SARKIS' CURRENT CHANCES OF SUCCESS WERE "NIL", HOWEVER. ALL THE PARTIES WOULD REPEAT THEIR ALL TOO FAMILIAR POSITIONS-- THE CHAMOUNISTS WOULD REJECT PARTICIPATION OF THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT AND THE PRO-SYRIAN PARTIES IN THE CABINET, THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT WOULD REJECT PARTICIPATION OF CHAMOUNISTS, ETC., ETC.

5. DESPITE CONTINUING EFFORTS OF SYRIA TO PROMOTE A BROAD NATIONAL FRONT INCLUDING THE LEBANESE NATIONAL MOVEMENT, ANY REAL RAPPROACHEMENT BETWEEN THE SYRIANS AND CONFIDENTIAL

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THE LEBANESE NATIONAL MOVEMENT WAS UNLIKELY. THERE MIGHT BE A BRIEF MARRIAGE OF CONVENIENCE, BUT EACH SIDE REMAINED DEEPLY SUSPICIOUS OF THE OTHER'S MOTIVES.

6. THE SYRIAN ARMY SHOULD NEVERTHELESS REMAIN IN LEBANON FOR THE TIME BEING. IF IT LEFT, THERE WOULD IMMEDIATELY BE RENEWED CIVIL WAR BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS HERE.

7. THE SITUATION INWEST BEIRUT WAS NOT GOOD, AS EVIDENCED BY THE GUN BATTLE NEAR THE HAMRA AREA ON AUGUST 29 BETWEEN MEMBERS OF AL MURABITUN AND WALID JUMBLATT'S PROGRESSIVE SOCIALIST PARTY (PSP). THIS FIGHT WAS ENTIRELY APOLITICAL AND NOT SANCTIONED BY LEADERS OF EITHER PARTY. NOBODY COULD MAINTAIN ORDER IN WEST BEIRUT, HOWEVER, WHERE THERE ARE COUNTLESS ARMED GROUPS AND NO EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATION TO CONTROL THEM.
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